

Plan of Study

**APPENDIX B: Public Involvement Program Plan for
Sacramento River Diversion Project Feasibility Study**

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APPENDIX B: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM PLAN FOR SACRAMENTO RIVER DIVERSION PROJECT FEASIBILITY STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Public involvement is a process by which interested and affected individuals, organizations, agencies, and governmental entities are consulted and invited to participate in a decision making process.

Public involvement for the Sacramento River Diversion Project Feasibility Study (Study) will have two principal objectives: 1) to inform various stakeholders about the Study and its preparation, and 2) to generate input from those stakeholders on key issues and concerns. This two-way dialogue will help shape the Study, making it a more inclusive, objective, and comprehensive. It will also facilitate an open and visible decision making process and enhance efforts to develop consensus on certain issues.

The proposed Public Involvement Program Plan (PIP Plan) is based on current and recent public outreach efforts conducted for similar types of studies, as well as the collective knowledge and experience of those responsible for drafting the PIP Plan. This PIP Plan will support Reclamation, the local sponsors, other cooperating agencies, and the public to work collaboratively toward a recommendation that can be effectively implemented. The PIP Plan will be regularly reviewed and updated to improve its effectiveness and efficiency.

Public Law 106-554 stipulates that the Study be prepared within two years from the date of authorization. The PIP Plan will maximize public involvement within that schedule. Public participation strategies and activities will be developed to ensure consistent participation throughout the process while focusing on opportunities for participation at key decision making points.

Objectives

The objective of this Appendix is to describe the message, methods, and specific approach of the PIP Plan proposed for the Study.

Overview of this Appendix

The Appendix begins with identification of the seven strategic messages to be conveyed through the PIP Plan, as well as the target audiences for those messages. A discussion of the various informational and involvement tools follows identification of the strategic messages and target audiences. The application of the informational and involvement tools during the four principal phases of the Study is also discussed. The Appendix concludes with a suggested budget and schedule for implementing the PIP Plan.

STRATEGIC MESSAGES

Developing an effective public involvement process for the Study will be challenging due to the complexity of the Sacramento River Diversion Project (Project), the anticipated two-year duration of the Study, the technical nature of the analysis of the alternatives, and the structured nature of the Federal planning process. To meet these challenges, Reclamation will focus on conveying seven strategic messages to inform the public of the Study's relevance and immediacy:

- The Project is consistent with completed and on-going comprehensive regional water resources planning efforts.

- The Project provides safe and reliable water supplies for Placer County and Sacramento County.
- The Project will be evaluated within the construct of appropriate land use planning and habitat management plan implementation.
- The Project provides environmental, recreational, and aesthetic benefits to Folsom Lake and the lower American River.
- The Project provides environmental benefits to the Delta by providing Delta inflows of higher quality.
- The Project will not injure legal users of surface water in the Sacramento Valley.
- The Project will not injure legal exporters of surface water from the Delta.

IDENTIFICATION OF INTERESTED PUBLICS AND TARGET AUDIENCES

To reflect a balance of the various interests and perspectives, an effective public involvement program requires comprehensive identification of (and participation by) potentially affected groups and organizations. Public outreach efforts for the Study will engage the public in two ways: as an “audience”, and as “participants”.

When the outreach takes the form of information, those involved will be considered as an audience. Informational tools will be utilized to address these groups. When the outreach takes the form of involvement, those involved will be considered participants. A somewhat different set of tools will be utilized to address these groups.

Interest groups whose involvement in the Study process will be particularly important include (in no particular order):

- General public
- Water users (in particular, surface water users of the Sacramento River and Delta)
- Stakeholders (e.g., environmental interests, fisheries interests, wildlife interests, water users groups, public interest groups, recreational interests, Native American interests, etc.)
- Elected officials
- The Media (printed, television, and radio)
- Academia
- Government resource and regulatory agencies
- Government forums

INFORMATION TOOLS

The PIP Plan will include a multi-media, multi-tool public information effort to raise awareness of the Project. The purpose of raising awareness is to minimize or eliminate surprises regarding the future of the Project. Public information is typically a one-way forum with little or no opportunity for feedback. However, public informational efforts are a necessary foundation for soliciting public comment. The following sections describe the range of public information tools that will be applied during the Study.

Project Web Site

A web site would allow Internet users access to detailed information about the Study. It would be an effective tool for disseminating information to the media, general public, stakeholders and community opinion leaders, keeping them abreast of the study progress. Information would include the objectives

and details about the Study, significant schedule milestones, upcoming public outreach meetings, and project newsletters. The web site would be updated as new information, reports, and links become available.

Mailing List Database

The establishment of a mailing list database would create a network of individuals interested in the Study including elected officials, stakeholders, governmental agencies, interest groups, and interested individual members of the public. The mailing list database would be used to mail out newsletters and various other publications, as well as notices of public outreach activities. It would also be used for querying specific organizations and contact personnel. Formal notification of the Draft Study release and the public hearing would be carried out using the mailing list. Opportunities to be included on the mailing list would be provided at all outreach activities and on the Project web site. E-mail addresses and mailing addresses would be included on this list to allow delivery of both hard documents and electronic documents.

Newsletters

An informational newsletter would be a valuable tool to keep interested individuals throughout the region informed of the Study's progress. It would provide periodic reports on the types and status of Study activities and include information to help the general public understand technical analyses and key issues. It would also provide an effective means of notification of public meetings and other upcoming events. The newsletter would be available at public outreach events and would be sent out in response to information requests and to everyone on the mailing list database. Each issue would be posted in PDF format on the Project web site.

Traveling Displays

A traveling display would be a stand-alone exhibit presenting basic Study information such as the Project timeline, the various Project alternatives, and a Project map. It would be designed to answer the following questions:

- What is the Sacramento River Diversion Project about?
- What is Reclamation's role in the Sacramento River Diversion Project?
- Why should I be interested in this study?
- How can I get involved?

This display would be used in a variety of settings including public meetings, workshops, and briefings.

Brochure

A brochure would present a succinct summary of the Study. It would describe the scope of the Study, Reclamation's role in the Study, and the alternatives being analyzed. The importance of regional coordination would be emphasized. The federal agencies working as partners on the Study would be identified. The brochure would accompany the traveling display and would be available at all outreach activities. The Project web site address and a telephone point of contact would be listed for those wanting to follow up on the Study or to provide comments.

Information Packets

Information packets outlining the status of the Study activities, technical analyses and results, public involvement activities, schedules, and other information would be valuable tools to inform the technically-oriented public, stimulate discussion and interaction, and focus input on key issues. These packets would be prepared and distributed at meetings and briefings and sent to interested individuals and groups upon request.

Informational Media Relations

The Media will play an important role in informing national, state, regional and local interests about the Study's progress. Media tools would include press kits, press releases, and public service announcements. Press kits would be developed to give members of the media an overview of the Study and its process. It would include maps, fact sheets, contact information, press clippings, and schedules of public meetings. Other information provided to the media in various forms would include announcements of public meetings, explanations of alternatives being evaluated, progress reports, clarifications of Reclamation's mission, and corrections of misinformation. However, it is essential that the media relationships would be strictly conducted based on Reclamation policy on media contact.

INVOLVEMENT TOOLS

The PIP Plan involves interested parties in a public dialog at key points in the Study. Public involvement consists of two-way communication between the target audience and Reclamation. Involvement tools allow interested parties to provide the Study team with feedback on a variety of issues.

For the public involvement effort, the Study team will identify how feedback will be used. The input will then be reviewed and, where appropriate, incorporated into the Study. Such input will provide the public with an opportunity to influence the Study scope and increase the opportunity for Study team members to consider a range of public perspectives.

Public Meetings

A variety of meetings involving the public would be carried out as part of the Study including:

- Scoping sessions
- Public involvement meetings
- Regional roundtable workshops
- Focus group meetings
- Public hearings (for community assessment)

The meetings would be designed to present specific topics or elements of the Study and to encourage public inputs or comments. The meetings would establish direct links between various members of the public and team members while providing a forum for public comments and input.

Notices of all meetings will be distributed well ahead of the meeting date. Meetings would be facilitated by Reclamation staff or professional consultants. The Project Manager and key staff will open meetings with a review/update of progress and activities for the Study. Presentations of topics will be made by technical staff and supported by information materials distributed at the meetings.

Public comments will be solicited and recorded at each meeting, and entered into a comment tracking database.

Scoping Sessions

Public scoping meetings would be held to collect public inputs and comments on a number of topics. Scoping sessions would be conducted to identify issues to be considered in alternative development for the Project. Issues include environmental concerns, required agency coordination, and other issues.

Public Involvement Meetings

Formal public involvement meetings would be held to:

- Inform the public and stakeholders about the Study status and progress
- Hear public concerns
- Respond to questions
- Stimulate public involvement

These meetings would be conducted on a regional basis to enable all interested members of the public have an opportunity to participate conveniently.

Regional Roundtable Workshops

Roundtable workshops would be held to encourage active participation and involvement in the Study by members of the public, interest groups, and potentially affected communities. These workshops would afford the opportunity for interested individuals and groups to offer input on specific issues related to the Study.

Focus Group Meetings

Focus group meetings would be conducted to target assist specific stakeholder groups. These meetings would be smaller than the regional roundtable workshops, allowing for more detailed discussion of the scoping process, the alternative development process, the review of impact analysis results, and other technical issues.

Public Hearings

Public hearings would be planned after the Draft Study (including the environmental documents) has been distributed for public review. These hearings would provide an opportunity for formal public questions and testimony. Stakeholder groups, interest groups, elected officials, and individuals from the public would have a specified time limit to present comments and testimony about the Draft Study that would be recorded for inclusion in the official record.

Briefings for Elected Officials

The Study will likely receive considerable attention from the public. Consequently, elected officials will be interested as well. Briefings would keep the elected officials and their staffs informed regarding the progress of the Study and some of its more potentially controversial aspects. Briefings would also ensure that dialogue with key decision-makers is maintained. All news releases will be

sent directly to the offices of key officials. Specific invitations will be offered to attend public meetings and community forums.

Briefings for Management

Presentations to Reclamation managers and technical review staff, as well as managers and technical staff of other Federal and state resource and regulatory agencies, will be made to provide updates on Study activities and to facilitate study review, management direction, and policy decisions.

Speaking Requests

Speaking requests may come from special interest groups, stakeholders, service organizations, universities, professional societies, governmental agencies and others. Meeting all of these requests would ensure that timely, first hand, and accurate Study information was received. These engagements would also allow attendees to provide input on the Study.

Personal Communications

It will be necessary to establish a central point of contact for coordination of public requests. All publications, exhibits, newsletters, and the website page would indicate how to contact the Public Involvement Coordinator. The Project Manager, Lead Planner, Public Affairs Specialist, the Public Involvement Coordinator, and other team members would assist with public requests regarding the Study. Frequent, open communications between these team members would facilitate consistent, accurate responses to public requests and comments. The Public Involvement Coordinator would be responsible for addressing telephone calls, e-mail messages, comment cards (meetings), letters, and face-to-face comments and questions. Letter and e-mail responses would be addressed by team members most knowledgeable about the subject of concern or issue. Comments received that required no response would be documented as part of the permanent record.

COMMENT TRACKING

Public comments gathered at all activities and via telephone, faxes, written letters, and e-mail will be recorded into the permanent Study official record. This record will be a computerized database developed for the Study PIP. This database will be used to search for comments on specific issues to ensure that public concerns can be easily reviewed and used by the Project team.

MONITORING PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFECTIVENESS

Monitoring public outreach efforts may be accomplished in many ways, ranging from determining web site hits after a news release on meeting schedules to debriefing team members after presentations. In addition to questions, comments, and requests that will be received via email, telephone, and written media, the following sections describe methods that may be used to monitor public outreach effectiveness. However, no formal surveys will be conducted to determine outreach effectiveness for this Study.

Comment Cards

Comments cards would be distributed at all public outreach activities. All cards received would be read, evaluated, and added to the permanent Study official record. In addition, all people who

submitted comment cards would be added to the master mailing list to receive newsletters and pertinent Study information.

Web Site Analysis

Periodic web site analyses would be conducted to determine the effectiveness of this media for communicating information about the study. Data to be reviewed would include regional use, most requested pages, most downloaded files, and activity levels by week, day, and/or hour. These analyses would assist in formulating successful public outreach efforts via the web site.

PUBLIC OUTREACH IN THE FEASIBILITY STUDY PHASES

The information and involvement tools discussed above will be used throughout the four phases of the Study process which include:

- Project Scoping
- Project Alternatives Development
- Alternatives Refinement and Impact Analysis
- Preparation of the Draft and Final Feasibility Study reports (including preparation of the EIS/EIR)

These four phases and tools to be employed are discussed below.

Project Scoping

Scoping will be used to determine the range and types of issues that relate to a proposed action. It is generally the first public involvement activity in a joint National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review process.

Scoping for the Study will give individuals, groups, organizations, and government agencies an opportunity to identify issues of concern, provide input on level of detail, offer opinions about formulation and content of alternatives, identify methods to assess impacts, and suggest ideas for potential mitigation measures. After the formal scoping process, informal scoping will continue into later phases to ensure that the Study captures new and evolving issues.

A number of the information and involvement tools described previously will be utilized during this phase. Specific activities are shown on the attached schedule and include:

- Develop initial mailing list database based on the understanding of the Project team. This list will be modified and updated as the Study progresses.
- Develop an initial Study information packet.
- Develop and establish a Study web site.
- Prepare and distribute media release describing the Study.
- Conduct three public scoping meetings (one in the Sacramento Valley to address potential concerns of Sacramento River water users, one in Stockton to address the concerns of diverters from the Delta, and one in Placer County to address local concerns). Announcements for the scoping meetings will be sent to everyone on the mailing list database. Information packets will be distributed at each meeting.
- Conduct topic-specific briefings with state and federal resource and regulatory agencies on an as-needed/as-requested basis.

- Provide briefing to local elected officials.
- Provide briefing to key local focus group (e.g., the Water Forum Successor effort).

Project Alternatives Development

Several activities will be conducted in the project development phase. A “Purpose and Need Statement” will be drafted to describe the water supply purpose and need that brought about the enabling legislation. The Statement will guide development of the alternatives to ensure conformance with legislative intent. Reclamation will also define the Existing Conditions, which describe the current environmental conditions. A Future without Project Condition will be defined to describe the likely future conditions in the study area without the Project. This will be used as a point of comparison for assessing the effects of implementing the legislation. Finally, the initial alternatives will be developed.

A number of the information and involvement tools described previously will be utilized during this phase. Specific activities are shown on the attached schedule and include:

- Modify and update the mailing list database
- Refine and modify the information packet.
- Maintain the Study web site.
- Conduct three public meetings (one in the Sacramento Valley to address potential concerns of Sacramento River water users, one in Stockton to address the concerns of diverters from the Delta, and one in Placer County to address local concerns). Announcements for the meetings will be sent to everyone on the mailing list database. Information packets will be distributed at each meeting.
- Conduct topic-specific briefings with state and federal resource and regulatory agencies on an as-needed/as-requested basis.
- Provide briefing to local elected officials.
- Provide briefing to key local focus group (e.g., the Water Forum Successor effort).

Alternatives Refinement and Impact Analysis

Impact analysis will involve evaluating the impacts and benefits of the Future without Project Condition and each alternative. The process will also include refinement of the alternatives to ensure that analysis results will be useful and accurate. Detailed analysis will be conducted to identify potential impacts on a range of issue areas.

A number of the information and involvement tools described previously will be utilized during this phase. Specific activities are shown on the attached schedule and include:

- Modify and update the mailing list database
- Refine and modify the information packet.
- Maintain the Study web site.
- Conduct topic-specific briefings with state and federal resource and regulatory agencies on an as-needed/as-requested basis.
- Develop and distribute a quarterly newsletter describing Study progress.
- Provide briefing to local elected officials.
- Provide briefing to key local focus group (e.g., the Water Forum Successor effort).
- Conduct a regional roundtable workshop to report on Study progress.
- Respond to speaking requests from time to time.

Preparation of the Draft and Final Feasibility Study Reports

This phase will include several activities. After the Draft Study preparation and circulation for review, public hearings will be held to formally receive public comments on the document. The public may also submit comments in writing. Once the formal public review process is completed, the Final Study will be prepared. The Final Study will consist of revisions on the Draft Study based on public comments, as well as the formal response to comments, which addresses the public comments received on the Draft Study. The Final Study will be used to select a set of actions to implement the legislation. A Record of Decision will be filed and will mark the end of the NEPA process.

For completion of the CEQA process, the Lead Agency must certify that the EIR is in compliance with CEQA requirements and must adopt findings of overriding considerations and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP). EIRs are subject to a 30-day challenge period in which the Lead Agency may be sued for certification of an inadequate EIR.

A number of the information and involvement tools described previously will be utilized during this phase. Specific activities are shown on the attached schedule and include:

- Modify and update the mailing list database
- Refine and modify the information packet.
- Maintain the Study web site.
- Prepare and distribute media release describing the progress of the Study.
- Conduct topic-specific briefings with state and federal resource and regulatory agencies on an as-needed/as-requested basis.
- Develop and distribute a quarterly newsletter describing Study progress.
- Provide briefing to local elected officials.
- Provide briefing to key local focus group (e.g., the Water Forum Successor effort).
- Respond to speaking requests from time to time.
- Conduct three public hearings (one in the Sacramento Valley to address potential concerns of Sacramento River water users, one in Stockton to address the concerns of diverters from the Delta, and one in Placer County to address local concerns) to take public comment on the draft environmental documents. Announcements for the meetings will be sent to everyone on the mailing list database. Information packets will be distributed at each meeting.